

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3604

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COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

# Anchorage Daily News: “Re-allocate the hundreds of millions earmarked for bridges in Ketchikan and Anchorage to disaster relief and reconstruction in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.”

Dear Colleague,

I plan to offer an amendment to H.R. 3058, the Treasury, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, that would transfer funding from a wasteful pork project in Alaska to the much-needed repair and reconstruction of the “Twin Spans” bridge in Louisiana.



Conceptual rendering of Gravina Island Bridge

OR



A bridge destroyed by Hurricane Katrina

Following Hurricane Katrina, numerous citizens of Alaska – in a show of great compassion and charity – offered to donate federal money for Alaskan transportation projects to the reconstruction of devastated infrastructure in Louisiana. A September 13, 2005, letter-to-the-editor published in the *Anchorage Daily News* stated, “In a collective act of compassion, the people of Alaska should request that the funds appropriated for our bridges be used for infrastructure reconstruction in the hurricane-affected area.” Another letter-to-the-editor in the same newspaper suggested that Alaskans should ask Congress “to re-allocate the hundreds of millions earmarked for the bridges in Ketchikan and Anchorage to disaster relief...and reconstruction in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.”

The recently passed transportation bill (H.R. 3) included \$223 million for the construction of a bridge from Ketchikan, Alaska (population 8,900) to Gravina Island (population 50). According to *USA Today*, this bridge would be nearly as long as the Golden Gate Bridge and higher than the Brooklyn Bridge. Skeptics of the plans for this Alaskan bridge have dubbed it the “bridge to nowhere” because it serves so few people and costs so much money. Regarding the necessity of this project, Taxpayers for Common Sense, a government watchdog and taxpayer advocacy organization, notes that this massive new bridge “would replace a 7-minute ferry ride from Ketchikan to Ketchikan Airport on Gravina Island.” The website of the Gravina Island Access Project confirms that access to Gravina Island is already available via ferry, with departures “every 15 to 30 minutes[.]”

Numerous taxpayer advocacy groups, news organizations, and political commentators on all sides of the political debate have noted the rampant waste associated with this bridge to nowhere. Instead of funneling taxpayer dollars to fund the construction of a wasteful and unnecessary bridge, I believe that we should spend taxpayer dollars where they are most needed. In that vein, my amendment to H.R. 3058 re-directs all funds associated with the Gravina Island Bridge to the repair and reconstruction of the Twin Spans Bridge in Louisiana.

In the interest of serving those who were most directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina, I ask that you either co-sponsor or support Coburn Amendment #2085 when it comes to the Senate floor. If you have any questions about this amendment, please feel free to contact Tad DeHaven or Sean Davis of my staff.

Sincerely,



Tom Coburn, M.D.  
U.S. Senator